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Members of Congress on TikTok defend app's reach to voters

By FARNOUSH AMIRI
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. Jeff Jackson of North Carolina has used it to explain the complex fight over raising the debt limit. Rep. Robert Garcia of California has used it to engage with members of the LGBTQ+ community. And Sen. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania has used it to give an overview of Election Day results. As pressure against TikTok mounts in Washington, the more than two dozen members of Congress — all Democrats — who are active on the social media platform are being pushed by their colleagues to stop using it. Many defend their presence on the platform, saying they have a responsibility as public officials to meet Americans where they are — and more than 150 million are on TikTok. “I’m sensitive to the ban and recognize some of the security implications.



TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew testifies during a hearing of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, on the platform's consumer privacy and data security practices and impact on children, Thursday, March 23, 2023, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Associated Press

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Members of Congress on TikTok defend app's reach to voters



Rep. Jamaal Bowman, D-N.Y., joined by the popular app's supporters, leads a rally to defend TikTok at the Capitol in Washington, Wednesday, March 22, 2023.

Continued from Front

But there is no more robust and expeditious way to reach young people in the United States of America than TikTok," Democratic Rep. Dean Phillips of Minnesota told The Associated Press.

Yet the lawmakers active on TikTok remain a distinct minority. Most in Congress are in favor of limiting the app, forcing a sale to remove connections to China or even banning it outright. The U.S. armed forces and more than half of U.S. states have already banned the app from official devices, as has the federal government. Similar bans have been imposed in Denmark, Canada, Great Britain and New Zealand, as well as the European Union.

Criticism of TikTok reached a new level last week as CEO Shou Zi Chew testified for more than six hours at a contentious hearing in the House. Lawmakers grilled Chew about the implications of the app for America's national security and the effect on the mental health of its users. And the tough questions came from both sides of the aisle,

as Republicans and Democrats alike pressed Chew about TikTok's content moderation practices, its ability to shield American data from Beijing and its spying on journalists.

"I've got to hand it to you," said Rep. August Pfluger, R-Texas, as members questioned Chew over data security and harmful content. "You've actually done something that in the last three to four years has not happened except for the exception of maybe (Russian President) Vladimir Putin. You have unified Republicans and Democrats." While the hearing made plain that lawmakers view TikTok as a threat, their lack of first-hand experience with the app was apparent at times. Some made inaccurate and head-scratching comments, seemingly not understanding how TikTok connects to a home Wi-Fi router or how it moderates illicit content.

Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Wis., who is active on the app and opposes a nationwide ban, called the hearing "cringeworthy."

"It was just so painful to watch," he told the AP on Friday. "And it just shows

the real problem is Congress doesn't have a lot of expertise, whether it be social media or, for that matter, more importantly, technology."

Garcia, who said he uses TikTok more as a consumer, said most of his colleagues who are proposing a nationwide ban told him they had never used the app. "It gets hard to understand if you're not actually on it," the freshman Democrat said. "And at the end of the day, a lot of TikTok is harmless people dancing and funny videos."

"It's also incredibly rich educational content, and learning how to bake and learning about the political process," he said.

Rep. Jamaal Bowman, D-N.Y., who has more than 180,000 followers on the app, held a news conference with TikTok influencers before the hearing. He accused Republicans of pushing a ban on TikTok for political reasons.

"There are 150 million people on TikTok and we are more connected to them than Republicans are," Bowman said. "So for them, it's all about fear-mongering and power. It's not Tik-

Tok, because, again, we've looked the other way and allowed Facebook and other platforms to do similar things."

Critics of TikTok in Congress say their opposition is rooted in national security, not politics. TikTok is a wholly owned subsidiary of Chinese technology firm ByteDance Ltd., which appoints its executives. They worry Chinese authorities could force ByteDance to hand over TikTok data on American users, effectively turning the app into a data-mining operation for a foreign power. The company insists it is taking steps to make sure that can never happen.

"The basic approach that we're following is to make it physically impossible for any government, including the Chinese government, to get access to U.S. user data," general counsel Erich Andersen said during an interview with the AP on Friday at a cybersecurity conference in California.

TikTok has been emphasizing a \$1.5 billion proposal to store all U.S. user data on servers owned and maintained by the software giant Oracle. Access to U.S.

data would be managed by U.S. employees through a separate entity run independently of ByteDance and monitored by outside observers.

Republican Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina took the unusual step of releasing a public statement urging all members of Congress to stop using TikTok, including from his home state — seemingly a jab at Jackson, who is one of the more active members with more than 1.8 million followers.

"I was just saying if we're having a discussion about TikTok then I think we ought to at least reduce the pull factor by elected officials who can simply come off of it," Tillis said this week, when asked about his statement. "I don't have a TikTok account. So that was an easy separation for me."

Loud warnings about TikTok have also been coming from President Joe Biden's administration. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and FBI Director Christopher Wray have told Congress in recent weeks that TikTok is a national security threat. Blinken told lawmakers the threat "should be ended one way or another." But some members are unconvinced.

"It's like turning your cell phone off on an airplane. You're supposed to do. And if it was super dangerous, I don't think we will be allowed to have the phone on the plane," Rep. Greg Landsman, D-Ohio, said Wednesday. "So if it was super dangerous for members of Congress to have this app on their phone, you have to imagine the administration or our government would say absolutely not, you can't have it on a government phone." Concerns about what kind of content Americans encounter online, or how their data is collected by technology companies, also aren't new. Congress has been wanting to curtail the amount of data tech companies collect on consumers through a national privacy law, but those efforts have stalled repeatedly over the years. □

Associated Press

Minnesota gun ruling is latest citing Supreme Court decision

By STEVE KARNOWSKI

Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — A federal court ruling that a Minnesota law prohibiting 18-to-20-year-olds from obtaining permits to carry handguns in public is unconstitutional remained on hold Monday while the state pursues a potential appeal.

A reluctant U.S. District Judge Katherine Menendez struck down the state law on Friday, citing a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision on gun rights last year. But after the state attorney general's office filed an emergency motion for a stay, she agreed to hold off, meaning 18-to-20-year-olds still can't apply for carry permits in Minnesota until the matter is resolved.

The ruling is the latest example how the Supreme Court case, known as the Bruen decision, has upended gun laws nationwide, dividing courts and sowing confusion over what restrictions can remain in force.

The plaintiffs are three gun rights groups, including the Minnesota Gun Owners Caucus, and three individuals who were over 18 but under 21 when the lawsuit was filed in 2021.

They have until Wednesday to file a response.



A Glock handgun is holstered on the side of Kristopher Kranz of Bloomington, Minn., as he listens during public testimony on Aug. 20, 2013, in St. Paul, Minn.

Associated Press

The judge has not set a hearing date.

Menendez said in her order Friday that she was obligated by the Bruen decision to conclude that that Second Amendment guarantees the rights of 18-to-20-year-olds to bear arms in public for self defense.

The Bruen decision, the high court's biggest gun ruling in more than a decade, held that Americans have a right to carry firearms in public for self-defense. And

it changed the test that lower courts had long used for evaluating challenges to firearm restrictions. The justices said judges should no longer consider whether the law serves public interests like protecting public safety. Under the new test, courts must ask whether a gun restriction is consistent with the country's "historical tradition of firearm regulation." Menendez concluded that that means the Second Amendment

protects the rights of 18-to-20-year-olds to obtain carry permits. But she also wrote that other courts have "struggled with deciphering exactly how to apply Bruen's instructions." While Minnesota adopted its age restriction in 2003 over public safety concerns about allowing young adults to carry handguns, she concluded that the high court's ruling doesn't allow balancing public safety interests against Sec-

ond Amendment rights. "If the Court were permitted to consider the value of these goals and how well Minnesota's age requirement fits the ends to be achieved, the outcome here would likely be different," she wrote.

Attorney General Keith Ellison's office, on behalf of the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, said district and appeals courts across the country have issued conflicting rulings on the rights of 18-to-20-year-olds to carry firearms outside the home. It said the issue is likely to be settled by the U.S. Supreme Court. So it asked the judge to stay her order while the office considers an appeal, or at least for 60 days so that state authorities can determine how to responsibly implement the change.

The Minnesota Gun Owners Caucus hailed the judge's ruling as a victory for 18-to-20-year-old adults who want to exercise their constitutional right to bear arms. Bryan Strawser, who chairs the group, said federal courts in Georgia, Tennessee and Texas have ruled the same way.

But gun safety groups said Menendez got the complicated job of interpreting the Bruen ruling wrong. □

Distraction, speeding, alcohol drive up 2021 traffic deaths

By TOM KRISHER

AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Nearly 43,000 people died in U.S. traffic crashes in 2021, the highest number in 16 years with deaths due to speeding and impaired or distracted driving on the rise. The 2021 final numbers, released Monday by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, confirmed earlier estimates by the agency showing a 10.5% increase in deaths over 2020. That's the highest number since 2005 and the largest percentage increase since 1975.

Data shows a 12% rise in fatal crashes involving at least one distracted driver, with 3,522 people killed. That

prompted the agency to kick off a \$5 million advertising campaign in an effort to keep drivers focused on the road. Agency officials

said such cases likely are under-reported by police. The number of pedestrians killed rose 13%, and cyclist fatalities were up 2% for

the year. The number of unbelted passengers killed rose 8.1%, while fatalities involving alcohol-impaired driving were up 14%.

Speeding-related deaths increased 7.9%, while crash deaths involving large trucks weighing over 10,000 pounds were up 17%.

At a news conference Monday in Seattle, NHTSA focused on distracted driving fatalities, which speakers said are entirely preventable if people stop using their cell phones, eating, or doing other things that divert attention from the road. "Remember it only takes a moment to change your life forever," said Sophie Shulman, NHTSA deputy administrator.

Steve Kiefer, a retired General Motors executive whose son, Mitchel, was killed in a 2016 distracted driving crash, said cell phones are a primary cause of distraction. But technology is available to prevent it including "do not disturb" modes, as well as apps and in-car systems that watch drivers to make sure they're paying attention. "All of this technology is available today, and there's no reason we can't use it and roll it out quickly," Kiefer said. Distracted driving deaths are related to America's addiction to cell phones, said Kiefer, who started a foundation with the goal of ending distracted driving. □



Emergency workers work the scene of a fatal accident on Aug. 24, 2021 in Tulsa, Okla.

Associated Press

Trump returns to New York to face charges in criminal probe

By **MICHAEL R. SISK, TERRY SPENCER and WILL WEISSE**
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Donald Trump flew Monday from Florida to New York for his historic booking and arraignment on hush money charges, as the nation's largest city bolstered security and warned potential protesters it was "not a playground for your misplaced anger."

Trump's motorcade ride from his Mar-a-Lago club to his red, white and blue Boeing 757, emblazoned with his name in gold letters, was carried live on cable television. It took him past supporters waving banners and cheering, decrying the case against him stemming from payments made during his 2016 campaign as politically motivated.

Trump is already months into a third campaign to reclaim the White House he lost to President Joe Biden in 2020, and he and his advisers seemed to relish the attention. Cable networks followed his plane at airports in Florida and New York with video from the air, and Trump was joined aboard by a small group of senior campaign aides as well as his son, Eric Trump, who eagerly posted photos of the wall-to-wall TV coverage from his seat.

The scene was quite different in New York, where Trump built a national profile in business and entertainment but became deeply unpopular as he moved into politics. Prosecutors say their case against him has nothing to do with politics and have defended the work of Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg who is leading it.

Trump is facing multiple charges of falsifying business records, including at least one felony offense, in the indictment handed down by a Manhattan grand jury last week. The investigation is scrutinizing six-figure payments made to porn actor Stormy Daniels and former Playboy model Karen McDougal.

Both say they had sexual encounters with the mar-



Former President Donald Trump waves to supporters upon arriving at Trump Tower, Monday, April 3, 2023, in New York.

ried Trump years before he got into politics. Trump denies having sexual liaisons with either woman and has denied any wrongdoing involving payments.

It's an unprecedented chapter in American history, with Trump the first former president to face criminal charges. But he's betting it could actually boost his chances at winning the presidency again next year. In the meantime, the case is causing major legal, political and cultural events to collide in unprecedented ways.

Trump's team was embracing the media circus. After initially being caught off guard by news of the indictment last Thursday evening, he and his aides are hoping to use the case to his advantage. That idea clashed with the former president's own attorneys, however, who asked the judge in a Monday filing to ban photo and video coverage of his arraignment, which is expected Tuesday afternoon.

Repeating his frequent denunciation, Trump posted, "WITCH HUNT" on his social media network.

He also bolstered his legal team Monday, adding a third high-profile attorney, Todd Blanche, according to three people familiar with the matter. Blanche, a

former federal prosecutor, has previously represented Trump's former campaign chairman Paul Manafort. The people would not publicly discuss details of the legal team's plan and therefore spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The former president planned to spend the night at Trump Tower, then surrender to authorities on Tuesday for booking and the arraignment.

Officials have so far not seen an influx of people coming into the city, as was the case in Washington in the days before a mob of Trump supporters overran the U.S. Capitol in January 2021. Still, they warned that possessing a weapon in certain areas of the city, including near courthouses, is a crime.

"While there may be some rabble rousers thinking about coming to our city tomorrow, our message is clear and simple: control yourselves," said New York Mayor Eric Adams. "New York City is our home, not a playground for your misplaced anger. We are the safest large city in America because we respect the rule of law in New York City."

Trump Tower was open Monday, but traffic was expected to be snarled

by nearby street closings, especially as the former president came and went. Additional security was also in the works. A small group of supporters hung large "Trump 2024" banners across from a makeshift pen of reporters, a block away from Trump Tower. Authorities also have taken steps to close and secure the courthouse floor where Trump is to appear before a judge as part of his arraignment.

One of Trump's staunchest defenders in Congress, Republican Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, was helping to organize a rally in New York for Tuesday morning, and Mayor Adams took the unusual step of calling her out by name. "Although we have no specific threats, people like Marjorie Taylor Greene, who is known to spread misinformation and hate speech, she's stated she's coming to town," Adams said.

"While you're in town, be on your best behavior." Arriving in Minnesota where he was touring a factory to promote his administration's economic policies, Biden was asked if he thought there would be unrest in New York.

"No, I have faith in the New York Police Department," the president replied. He

also said he had faith in the nation's legal system.

Florida Trump supporters gathered at a West Palm Beach shopping center on the way to the airport, hours before he was set to pass along the route. Boca Raton firefighter Erik Solensten and his retired colleague, John Fischer, put up banners. One was 30 by 6 feet (9 by 2 meters), picturing police officers and firefighters saying, "Thanks for having our backs, President Trump."

"We are fire-rescue. We are prepared and don't like to wait for things to happen," said Solensten, who took a vacation day to show support for Trump. "He needs morale just like everyone else needs morale. He's done more for this country than any 10 presidents combined."

Trump senior adviser Jason Miller said the campaign had raised \$7 million since word of the indictment broke, but official figures have not yet been released. One Trump fundraising email Monday carried the subject line, "Tomorrow, I will be arrested." Top Republicans, including some of Trump's potential rivals in next year's GOP presidential primary, have decried the case against him.

Biden, who has yet to formally announce that he's seeking reelection next year, and other leading Democrats have largely had little to say about it, including on Monday.

Trump's former U.N. Ambassador, Nikki Haley, was campaigning near the U.S.-Mexico border and suggested that coverage of the former president's indictment was distracting from other key issues such as immigration.

But she also said, "You've got a liberal prosecutor that's doing political revenge against a former president."

"We're dealing with a lot of political drama that's unnecessary because you've got political, vengeful people out there," Haley told Fox News Channel. □

Philippines names 4 new camps for U.S. forces amid China fury

By JIM GOMEZ
Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) —

The Philippine government on Monday identified four new military camps, including some across the sea from Taiwan, where rotating batches of American forces will be allowed to be stationed indefinitely despite strong objections from China.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s administration announced in February his approval of an expansion of the U.S. military presence to four additional Philippine military bases from the five existing sites under the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement between the longtime treaty allies.

Marcos said the move would boost the Philippines' coastal defense. It dovetails with the Biden administration's efforts to strengthen an arc of military alliances in the Indo-Pacific to better counter China, including in any future confrontation over Taiwan.

The new sites identified by Marcos' office include a Philippine navy base in Santa Ana and an international airport in Lal-lo, both in northern Cagayan province. Those locations have



Philippine Army Artillery Regiment Commander Anthony Coronel, left, returns a salute from a US soldier during a joint military drill called Salaknib at Laur, Nueva Ecija province, northern Philippines on Friday, March 31, 2023.

Associated Press

infuriated Chinese officials because they would provide U.S. forces with a staging ground close to southern China and Taiwan, the self-governed island Beijing claims as its own.

The two other military areas are in northern Isabela province and a navy camp on Balabac island in the western province of Palawan.

Palawan faces the South China Sea, a key passage for global trade that Beijing claims virtually in its entirety

and has taken increasingly aggressive actions that have threatened smaller claimant states, including the Philippines.

China and the Philippines, along with Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan, have been locked in increasingly tense territorial disputes over the busy and resource-rich South China Sea. Washington lays no claims to the strategic waters but has deployed warships and fighter and surveillance aircraft for patrols

that it says promote freedom of navigation and the rule of law, angering Beijing. The four new military sites for American forces are "suitable and mutually beneficial" and will "boost the disaster response of the country" as a springboard for humanitarian and relief work during emergencies, Marcos's office said.

In a statement, the U.S. Department of Defense said the new locations "will strengthen the interoperability of the U.S. and Phil-

ippine Armed Forces and allow us to respond more seamlessly together to address a range of shared challenges in the Indo-Pacific region."

In a meeting last month with Philippine officials in Manila, however, a Chinese Foreign Ministry delegation expressed its strong opposition to an expanded U.S. military presence in the Philippines and warned of repercussions for regional peace and stability, a Philippine official involved in the talks said at the time.

Philippine diplomats replied that the decision to allow an expanded American military presence was in the Philippines' national interest and would boost its ability to respond to natural disasters, the official said, suggesting the move was not aimed at China.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authority to publicly discuss the sensitive issue.

The Chinese Embassy also warned in a recent statement that the Philippine government's security cooperation with Washington "will drag the Philippines into the abyss of geopolitical strife and damage its economic development at the end of the day." □

Hungary's Orban tells Trump to 'keep on fighting' in tweet

By JUSTIN SPIKE
Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) —

Hungary's populist prime minister, Viktor Orban, tweeted a message of support for former U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday, urging him to "keep on fighting" as he faces a criminal indictment for making hush payments during his 2016 presidential campaign.

Orban's post on Twitter featured a photograph of the two men smiling and shaking hands during a meeting at Trump's Bedminster, New Jersey, estate last Au-

gust. The far-right Hungarian leader had traveled to the United States to speak at the Conservative Political Action Conference, or CPAC, in Texas.

"Keep on fighting, Mr. President! We are with you," Orban wrote in the tweet on Monday.

Trump's indictment by a Manhattan grand jury on Friday was a historic reckoning after years of investigations into his personal, political and business dealings, and an abrupt jolt to his bid to retake the White House.

The exact nature of the

charges against him is unclear because the indictment remains under seal, but they stem from payments made during the 2016 presidential campaign to silence claims of an extramarital sexual encounter.

Trump is expected to surrender to authorities this week in the first criminal case ever brought against a former U.S. president, but has denied any wrongdoing.

Orban, accused by his critics of dismantling many of Hungary's democratic institutions and overseeing a



President Donald Trump welcomes Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban to the White House in Washington, on May 13, 2019.

Associated Press

widespread network of official corruption, was the first European national leader to publicly endorse Trump's presidential candidacy in 2016, and voiced his support for Trump's 2020 campaign as well.

As Orban sought a fourth-straight term as prime minister last year, Trump praised him as a "strong leader" who "truly loves his country," and lauded his efforts to crack down on illegal immigration. □

Finland doubling NATO's border with Russia in blow to Putin

By LORNE COOK

Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The blue-and-white Finnish flag rises outside NATO headquarters Tuesday afternoon, making Finland a member and doubling Russia's border with the world's biggest security alliance.

The move is a strategic and political blow to President Vladimir Putin, who has long complained about NATO's expansion toward Russia and partly used that as a justification for his country's war with Ukraine.

"What we see is that President Putin went to war against Ukraine with a declared aim to get less NATO," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said. "He's getting the exact opposite."

Like all NATO members, Finland will benefit from the collective security guarantee that an attack on one is considered an attack on all.

NATO has said that it has no immediate intention to step up its presence in Finland. Some members have deployed troops there for war games over the last year. Russia immediately warned that it would bolster forces near Finland if NATO sends any additional troops or equipment to what will be



Finland's President Sauli Niinisto meets with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, left, at the presidential summer residence Kultaranta in Naantali, Finland, on June 12, 2022.

Associated Press

its 31st member country. Finland has substantial, well-trained armed forces with elite troops capable of operating in the sub-zero temperatures of the high north. The Nordic country also has a large reserve army and is investing heavily in new equipment, including dozens of U.S.-made F-35 fighter jets.

The Finnish flag rising between the French and the Estonian in a ceremony scheduled for 1330 GMT will

complete the fastest accession process in the organization's recent history. Alarmed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year, Finland applied to join NATO in May 2022. Neighboring Sweden also applied, but its accession process will take longer. The ceremony falls on NATO's very own birthday, the 74th anniversary of the signing of its founding Washington Treaty on April 4, 1949.

"It will be a good day for

Finland's security, for Nordic security, and for NATO as a whole," Stoltenberg told reporters on Monday on the eve of a meeting of alliance's foreign ministers in Brussels.

Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko warned that Moscow would bolster its own forces "in case of deployment of forces of other NATO members on the territory of Finland."

"We will strengthen our mili-

tary potential in the west and in the northwest," Grushko said, according to the state RIA Novosti news agency, although Russia is already having trouble marshaling forces against far-smaller Ukraine.

Finland shares a 1,340-kilometer (832-mile) border with Russia and unlike most members of the alliance, Finland did not cut defense spending and investment after the Cold War.

"They have trained and built a large army over many years and maintain that high level of readiness. Finland is also a country with extremely high level of resilience, of preparedness throughout the whole society," Stoltenberg said.

The country also helps to complete NATO's geographical puzzle by filling in a major gap in the strategically important Baltic Sea region in Europe's north.

On Tuesday, Stoltenberg said, Turkey, the last country to have ratified Finland's membership, will hand the official document enshrining its approval to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

NATO's top civilian official said he will then invite Finland to hand over its own signed documents, to complete the procedure. □

U.N. report charges South Sudan officials of rights violations

By DENG MACHOL

Associated Press

JUBA, South Sudan (AP) —

A United Nations-backed



Deputy Chief of Defense Forces Lt. Gen. Thoi Chany Reat, right, attends a ceremony for soldiers from the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) preparing to join the East Africa Community Regional Force (EACRF) in Congo, at the airport in Juba, South Sudan Monday, April 3, 2023.

Associated Press

panel of investigators alleges in a new report that several officials in South Sudan have perpetrated serious human rights violations and should be held accountable for their crimes. The governor of South Sudan's Unity State, Joseph Monytil, is cited for being responsible for gross violations of human rights as well as other senior government and military officials, in the report released Monday by the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan.

Lt. Gen. Thoi Chany Reat of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces is among individuals warranting criminal investigation over state-sanctioned extrajudicial killings carried out in Mayom County in August 2022, the report says.

Koch County Commissioner Gordon Koang is also mentioned in the report which accused him of playing a role in attacks against civilians in the town of Leer in February and April 2022.

The officials were not immediately available for comment. The U.N. experts' report says South Sudan, the world's youngest nation, must tackle "impunity" to stem persistent violence and rights abuses.

Perpetrators of the most serious crimes, including widespread attacks against civilians and extra-

judicial killings, remain unpunished, according to the report.

"Over several years, our findings have consistently shown that impunity for serious crimes is a central driver of violence and misery faced by civilians in South Sudan," said Yasmin Sooka, head of the investigating commissions.

So we have taken the step of naming more of the individuals who warrant criminal investigation and prosecution for their role in gross human rights violations."

The report is based on the commission's investigations over the last 12 months. □

History of fishing in Aruba



ORANJESTAD — Fishing has been a family tradition for ages in Aruba. Our ancestors used to fish for a living. Even though nowadays you don't see them often we still have some passionate fishermen on the island that go out every day in search for fish to feed their families and serve our local market. One of these fishermen is Gregory Wernet.

The so-called Continental Bank between Aruba and the opposite coast reaches a depth of about 650 feet. The sea is very rich in fish here. Since the time of the indigenous native people fish and other sea creatures such as turtles, octopus squids, conch and many type of crustaceans have formed a means of subsistence for the native Aruban inhabitants. Especially along the west coast of the island where the fishing grounds are settlements of fishermen. Until the arrival of the oil industry Aruban fishermen could supply Aruba's wants.

As a source of income, however, fishing did not amount too much. In the beginning of the 1900's approximately 160 people earn their living in this branch of this industry. Rancho, which stands for a shed, nowadays east Oranjestad, was the head quarter and remains the fishermen's settlement. Sa-

vaneta, Noord, Santa Cruz all had their fishermen's villages. At a rough estimate there were about a hundred small fishing boats during that time.

The Arubans were mainly engaged in coastal fishing, using rowing-boats or small sailing-boats, and lines or dragnets and canisters in shallow water. When fishing with deep-sea lines just over the bottom of the sea the boat is kept in place by means of a piece of rock serving as an anchor. The two most important species of fish by far caught in this manner are the pargo or red snappers and a variety

of groupers like the mero, jeanpao and the wowo di boyo.

Cruising off the coast the Aruban fisherman patiently waits for a fish willing to snap at the bait on the drag-line, in nets and traps. Veritable giants are sometimes caught. Barracudas weigh from 9 to 44 pounds and measure from 3 to almost 7 feet. The king-fish has a weight from 22 to 44 pounds; the moclat may tip the scales at 155, whilst garfish, having a length of nine feet, weigh over 132 pounds.

Most fish caught is used



for their own consumption, to feed their families and some are being sold in the market to local restaurants.

Fisherman Gregory Wernet

Gregory Wernet is a well-known fisherman from Santa Cruz. His father taught him fishing when he was a small child. Gregory has two sons, Jordan and Jordanny, which he taught fishing too, when they were only 3 years old and he takes them fishing with him. Fishing has been a family tradition for quite a long time and even his grandson Willvion of 7 years old is following his grandfather steps. This is the sixth generation of fishermen in their family.

They go deep sea fishing. There they catch red snapper, grouper and amberjack. They usually fish for 15 hours a day, but now due to the covid-19 measurements they go fishing from 5 in the morning until 8 o'clock at night or even sometimes from 8 at night till 5 in the morning. The day before they prepare

all their fishing tools such as the Lines, lures, spears, and load their boat with fishing reels, batteries, fill the gasoline tank, lights and some food and beverages. For bait he uses sardines, squid and the small fish known in Aruba as piskechi. The have two boats they use for fishing. 'Virgen del Valle' which is parked at the pier by the Seaport and 'Padrot' which they have at home.

The fish they catch they take home to their families and they also sell it to their clients. Gregory is proud to be a fisherman. It is a honest and humble job but with it he is able to feed his family even during hard times. It is a very dangerous job and you have to spend many hours on the sea, waiting patiently and risking your life while fighting a big fish and big waves but the adrenaline it brings with it but also just sitting there listening to the sound of the waves and enjoying the marvelous view that nature has to offer is all worth it.

Source: Etnia Nativa



Papillon: The butterfly effect of magnificent food



PALM BEACH — Do you remember the film “Papillon” starring Steve McQueen? Papillon restaurant is the island’s example where ‘life imitates art.’ The décor, especially the restrooms, was inspired by the movie. For more than a decade this restaurant has built a reputation with the fusion of classic French cuisine, Dutch and Caribbean flavors. Welcome in the world of wonders where ambiance, taste and service come together and you feel you are being welcomed in the home of the owner and her team.

“We find it really important that our guests have fun; can relax while listening to live music while their taste buds are being tickled by France, The Netherlands and the Caribbean. We offer a unique fusion of dishes and a night not to forget,” says owner Tina. As our special guest you can choose to dine inside our heartwarming airconditioned restaurant or we also offer outside dining on a cozy, elegant terrace with great ambiance of the surroundings. Perfect setting for an enjoyable time people watching while sipping on a delicious cocktail.

Fresh oysters, caviar and wild boar

You are on vacation, life is to enjoy! If you want something special, a different flow than the usual, then Papillon is the place to go. Foodies are in heaven here with classic

French dishes such as Foie Gras, Frog Legs, fresh Oysters coming in on a weekly basis from Holland, Escargots, Dover Sole à la Meunière flown in from Europe and filleted at the table, Duck Breast seared on the skin, roasted and braised Lamb in Balashi beer and slow braised Wild Boar Shank. Do not leave without trying the exclusive recommendation: Caviar! All of this combined with an extensive wine list from around the world makes Papillon a must-do on your Aruban vacation.

Let the music play!

Another reason to visit us is our Live Entertainment Schedule all through the week.

Get all cozy and warmed up on Sundays and Mondays by Marisella and her enchanting acoustic tunes accompanied by percussion only.

On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, Jairo will give you a real Saxophone treat while on Wednesday you can sit back, relax and enjoy your dinner while DJ Jason brings you the most smooth jazz and lounge music for a dreamy night.

The musicians interact with the guests & requests can be sent in.

The live tunes definitely add to the experience.



Vegetarian vibes present

Impressive vegetarian/vegan dishes are set up especially for the guests by the chef and Meredith from Vegan Aruba. “We offer vegan choices that are really good and tasty. Our daily soup is always vegan too”. What are you waiting for, make sure to pay a visit to this elegant yet laid-back restaurant while on Aruba. You are most welcome!

Chef’s Garden 6 course dinner by Papillon

Our one of a kind executive chef Juan Ludena gets extra creative outside the kitchen of Papillon Restaurant. Serving a 6 course surprise menu featuring his International flavors and creativity with refined dishes, chef Juan Ludena is determined to give you a night to remember. Wine pairing is optional. The chef’s secret garden is located in a local replica of the Aruba traditional ‘cunucu’ house. The tropical garden is the setting for a magical in-home private dining experience.

For more information about this magnificent option, please send us an email or ask our wait staff.

Papillon Restaurant is located at The Village across the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino and within walking distance of all other major hotels.

Make your reservation today at:

info@papillonaruba.com

or call/WhatsApp + 00297 6995400

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Family Fincham reasons:

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Climate

Always stay at La Cabana
Wonderful + Helpful Staff
Celebrating our 50th Wedding Anniversary

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently recognized the recognized Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba. Presenting the Ambassadors with the Goodwill certification as a token of appreciation. The honoring certification program is granted to ambassadors, to recognize, the loyalty, friendships, and visits to Aruba. For consecutively choosing Aruba as their preferred vacation destination each year.

The Honoring certification program has three levels, which are divided according to the quantity of consecutive years visiting the island.

Honoring Levels:

- Distinguished Ambassadors: 10+ years
- Goodwill Ambassadors: 20+ years
- Emerald Ambassadors: 35+ years

Honorees were:

Goodwill Ambassadors 20+ years:

Al & Linda Fincham residents of Michigan, United States (have been coming to Aruba for 25 years consecutively).

Mr. Jonathan Boekhoudt representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and members of the Marriott Ocean Club Aruba bestowed the certification of the Ambassadors.

The honorees were presented with the Goodwill Certification, and with memorable gifts of Aruba.

On behalf of the Government of Aruba, we would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to family Fincham for making Aruba their preferred vacation destination for so many years.



Aruba Today is delighted to share to its readers a new segment called "Beauty and the Beach", where we take a minute to honor our guests who have decided to spend their vacation on our beautiful and warm island.



In this edition, we'd like to give a shout out to **Danielle and Reggie from the town of China in Maine, U.S.A.** The couple are regular visitors of the island. Aruba is always proud to host all families and guests. We at Aruba Today encourage any visitor of the island to send in their pictures and/or messages; who knows? You might get on the cover!





Today Is Going To Be A Good Day

Here's why: Aruba Today collected some things to do **BEYOND** the beach. Yes, we know. Aruba, located 15 miles north of Venezuela in the warm waters of the southern Caribbean, is home to beautiful white-sand beaches, 82-degree days, and thus ideal for the perfect beach day. But we are also blessed with some of the warmest people in the world and our island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across, with a total area of 70 square miles. Bit more to discover than the white stretch on the coastline we say. Let's mention some of these hidden gems.


Nature Calls

The Arikok National park is worth the ride. We love the hikes that are guided by the park's rangers whose job is to maintain trails and protect natural resources. The flora and fauna are beautiful and the historical sites tell you about the island's indigenous roots. The guided tours are even free of charge. If you are not up to walking, you can drive through the park, one way or another this park is a great place to spend an entire day. Cruising through the landscape you end up at some of the most stunning beaches like Dos Playa or Daimara Beach. In Total the park consists of 7907 acres protected nature with a richness of animals living in it. The Aruban whiptail lizard (cododo), Aruban cat eye snake (santanero) and endangered rattle snake (cascabel) are just some of them, you can also admire these close in the park's Visitors' Center. For more information, visit the website www.arubanationalpark.org

The Lighthouse

No, you would not think of this as a hidden gem. The California Lighthouse is actually one of the most known highlights in Aruba and many repeated guests most probably took the ride up-hill already. But, there is a significant change to this tower. Since September 2016 you can climb the top. In 2015 Stichting Monumentenfonds started the restoration of the California Lighthouse. The project finished in September 2016 and the Lighthouse is now open for visitors to enjoy the beautiful view from the top. The construction of the California Lighthouse started in 1915. The name 'California' came from a vessel of the West India Company and Pacific Steamship Co. called 'California' that shipwrecked in the area in 1891. Therefore they came up with the idea of building a lighthouse that could indicate the island's eastern tip to ships with its light. www.arubalighthouse.com will give you more information.

Kayak in the Mangroves

Mangel Halto at Savaneta is definitely a place not to miss out on. The beautiful beach with the natural mangroves is simply a beauty, but if you are into a more active way to enjoy the nature: take a kayak. While you are doing some work-out -as it might get a little windy and rough-, you will see the island from a different perspective. You can even make a stop to do some snorkeling at the reef. Its fun, it's healthy and for sure something else. There are several companies that offer kayak tours, we had good experience with The Shack Kayak Tours Aruba, find them on Facebook. 



Imelda Geerman-Willems: 18 years of bringing joy to children

(Oranjestad)—For 18 long years now, Imelda Geerman-Willems have brought joy to the children of Aruba with her puppets, and in recent years, with her magnificent puppet shows. In an interview with our reporter, Imelda shares her journey that has led her into the world of child entertainment and puppetry.

Imelda has been a government worker for 30 years. She told our reporter that she comes from a family of 8 children; 5 girls, 3 boys. She is the youngest of the bunch. She's been married to Patrick Geerman for 22 years and they have one teenage son who is now 19 years old.

Imelda worked at Party Animals for 8 and a half years, but after her mother passed away, she decided to stop working at children's parties. "My mother's passing left a hole in my heart. Not long after that, I lost my father as well. It was a really rough time," she expressed.

A couple months after quitting Party Animals, she started to miss the joy of making children happy. After talking to her husband about how she felt, he started to prepare a surprise for her.



"When I saw materials start to come in the house, he surprised me with a number from the Chamber of Commerce with the name 'EZ party solutions' on it. It's been 18 years since that surprise, and it was one of the best things that has happened to me. I was able to go back to making children happy," she shared.

The first show from EZ Party Solutions included Tio George and Tanchi Esmee

(Uncle George and Aunt Esmee). Imelda explained that at that time, she had never visited Disney Land, but was really hoping to go one day. This gave her the idea to give children that may not have the luxury to go to Disney Land, to enjoy the same type of characters that you see there.

The first costume that Imelda got was a Hello Kitty costume for a friend's party. After that, they met with a group preparing their set for the Carnival Queen

show, with their theme being Sesame Street. Imelda and her husband immediately offered to provide costumes for the show—which ultimately won for best show that year.

After working on two shows with Tio George and Tanchi Esmee, Imelda shared that she did something beyond her comfort zone: she produced her own show named "Masha and the Bear." This show sold out 6 times over before it even premiered.

This year, she organized the show called "Encanto and Friends." She explained that after she saw the movie Encanto, she was inspired to make this show, along with the beloved character Sonic. After 4 full houses, EZ Party Solutions, along with dance group Kids & Youth in Action, received an invitation to perform in Curaçao.

"This was my dream come true, thanks to the EZ crew, my family—and last but not least, my promoter, Corine. We were able to represent Aruba and have left a beautiful mark. In Curaçao, we were able to sell out the show and perform for 1500 people in the audience. From the moment the first song played, you could hear the children's excitement. It really warmed our hearts and made us less nervous. It was a beautiful experience. It does take a lot of work, but it's always worth it for the kids. A big thanks goes to Miss Debra for joining the show," she expressed.

For what's in store this year, Imelda assures that there is a great show coming soon, but that she couldn't give away too much yet.

Lastly, Imelda extends her gratitude to everyone that has helped her dreams of bringing joy to children come true. "Once again, I want to thank God for giving me the energy and the motivation to do what I do, to my family for their support and patience, and to my crew who has always gone all out to make things happen." □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Drift onto the beach
- 7 Parting tool
- 11 Texas city
- 12 Lotion ingredient
- 13 Talked at length
- 15 Twin of Romulus
- 16 Docking spot
- 18 Go by
- 21 Tadpole's home
- 22 Continuing story
- 24 Under the weather
- 25 Buck's mate
- 26 Carnival city
- 27 Prepared potatoes
- 29 Dis-patched
- 30 Cease
- 31 Euro division
- 32 Fighting
- 34 Applied liberally
- 40 Singly
- 41 "Raging Bull" star
- 42 Fencing sword
- 43 Put on, as a play

DOWN

- 1 Spider's home
- 2 Completely
- 3 Mud bath setting
- 4 Enmity
- 5 Theater worker
- 6 Ode or ballade
- 7 Roman ruler
- 8 Archaic
- 9 Cow call
- 10 Writer Jonson
- 14 Indian coin
- 16 Magnet ends
- 17 Cove
- 19 Ambulance sound

A	L	O	H	A		V	O	C	A	L
C	A	R	O	L		A	W	A	K	E
T	H	E	M	E		S	E	P	I	A
			E	R	A	S		E	N	D
C	L	A	P	T	R	A	P			
H	A	L	L		F	L	E	E	T	S
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N	E	A	T	E	N		R	I	T	A
			E	M	O	T	I	C	O	N
R	I	B		P	R	O	D			
I	D	E	A	L		N	I	E	C	E
F	L	A	R	E		I	S	L	A	M
T	E	N	T	S		C	H	I	P	S

Yesterday's answer

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 20 Virtuous fellow | 31 Insertion sign |
| 21 Card spot | 33 Ties the knot |
| 22 Lawn starter | 34 Look upon |
| 23 Place to park | 36 One in a hand |
| 25 Ocean measure | 37 Really enjoy |
| 28 Despise | 38 Mine rock |
| 29 Venus's sister | 39 Silent assent |

1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10
11							12			
13							14			
			15							
	16	17				18		19	20	
21					22					23
24				25				26		
27			28				29			
	30					31				
		32		33						
34	35	36					37	38	39	
40					41					
42					43					

A X Y D L B A A X R
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

4-4

CRYPTOQUOTE

YDKL HAZ XRR PRWAGR HAZ, FH

WGMRTQ, MX LDR GRXZCL AW

K CMWRLMER AW IDAIAACKLR.

— BKLDKGMTR DRIPZGT

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: ONE DAY THE LITTLE RABBIT HEARD THE BOY TELL HIS NANNY THAT HE WAS REAL. HE WAS OVERCOME BY LOVE IN HIS HEART. — "THE VELVETEEN RABBIT"

Millennial Money: Manage the costs of a chronic condition



Pharmaceuticals are seen in North Andover, Mass., June 15, 2018.

Associated Press

By KATE ASHFORD
of NerdWallet

For millennials with chronic medical conditions or those raising kids with chronic conditions health care can be an enormous monthly expense. About 44% of older millennials born between 1981 and 1988 have at least one chronic health condition, including migraines, major depression and asthma, according to a 2021 survey of over 4,000 adults conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of CNBC Make It. And many millennials are also caring for children with complicated medical needs.

Expenses can include doctor's visits, tests and prescription drugs, plus indirect costs that may result from missing work.

But there are ways to keep health care costs lower, including taking advantage of a flexible spending account or health savings account, comparing pharmacy prices on medications and using a care manager through your insurance. Here are some strategies to try.

ASK QUESTIONS

If you have a chronic condition, be an active participant in your care. "Too many people go to the doctor and the doctor says, 'We're ordering this test; we're doing this medicine,' and they don't inquire as to why," says Carolyn McClanahan, a certi-

fied financial planner and physician in Jacksonville, Florida. "When you need bloodwork, ask the doctor, 'How is this bloodwork going to change what we do for me?'"

If the answer is essentially, "We're just checking," McClanahan says, ask your doctor whether you can safely skip that test because you're trying to control costs.

COMPARE MEDICATION COSTS

Your prescription medication may cost significantly less at another pharmacy. For example, a recent search for sumatriptan, a common migraine medication, showed prices ranging from about \$7 to \$36 at various pharmacies in Austin, Texas.

"People should always shop their prescription costs," McClanahan says. She suggests checking sites like goodrx.com, which offers coupons on prescriptions and shows nearby prices, or costplusdrugs.com, which sells drugs at a low cost. And ask your insurer whether there are preferred pharmacies on your plan.

If a medication is expensive, check with the manufacturer for discount programs or coupons. The manufacturer of diabetes medication Jardiance, for instance, offers a savings card that reduces prescription costs to \$10 per month for a limited time for eligi-

ble people. A month's supply of the drug lists for more than \$500 on GoodRx.

And if your insurer declines to cover a medication you need, appeal the decision. □

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'Schmigadoon!' gently mocks Broadway musicals in new season

By **MARK KENNEDY**

AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Aaron Tveit has starred in some amazing Broadway shows, but some of the classics have eluded him. So he was delighted to speed his way through many of them in the second season of "Schmigadoon!"

The Apple+ series that gently mocks Broadway musicals cast Tveit in a role that has snatches of "Pippin," "Godspell," "Hair" and "Jesus Christ Superstar" and put him again alongside a who's-who of Broadway veterans.

"It's just a dream," says the Tony Award winner. "It's so much fun and we have a blast doing it. I'm very, very fortunate to have had this come my way when it did. And I just can't believe we keep getting to do it."

"Schmigadoon!" returns this month, tackling the musicals of 1965-1979 with the same two main stars Cecily Strong and Keegan-Michael Key and many of the same stage talent that enlivened the first season, like Tveit and Jane Krakowski.

If the first season skewered such splashy musicals as "Brigadoon," "Hello, Dolly!" and "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers," the new one has fun with "Chicago," "Pippin," "Cabaret," "Annie" and "Hair" before moving into Stephen Sondheim territory with riffs on "Sweeney Todd." "I think season two lives on even a smarter and more intricate level," says



This image released by Apple TV+ shows Aaron Tveit, left, and Keegan-Michael Key in a scene from the second season of "Schmigadoon!"

Krakowski. "I think it's completely accessible to people who are nonmusical. But for people who know musical theater, I think you enjoy it in a whole other level." The season picks off where the first one ended, with Strong and Key playing a modern-day couple who long to return to the simple, apple-cheeked town of Schmigadoon and, so, go hiking again in the woods hoping to find it. Instead, they find Schmicago and are met by sneering dancers in bowler hats, fishnets and garters, leather gloves and lederhosen, moving in a very Bob Fosse-like libidinous style while dragging wooden chairs. "Women brimming with

lust/Men that you shouldn't trust/And orphans that don't wanna die," go the first song's lyrics. "Mysteries and magic/Endings that are tragic." "This is not the kind of musical I want to be in!" Strong's character warns her partner, hoping to turn back. "These musicals don't have happy endings." Returning alongside Strong, Key, Tveit and Krakowski are Kristin Chenoweth, Dove Cameron, Alan Cumming, Ariana DeBose, Ann Harada and Martin Short. Newcomers include Titus Burgess and Patrick Page. Cameron, in a bowl cut and dark eyelashes, plays a fun-loving sort of "Cabaret" Sally Bowles, while Burgess is

a fabulously sarcastic narrator, like the Leading Player from "Pippin." Cumming, the dandy mayor last season, is now the town's disheveled, bloody-aproned butcher from "Sweeney Todd," and Tveit plays the hunky leader of a bohemian-hippie commune. "This is a much more ambitious season," says Tveit. "The scale of the show is tremendously larger. And, of course, because we move into this next group of musicals in the '60s and '70, the subject matter of those is a bit darker, a bit more adult." There are blink-and-you'll-miss-'em physical nods to musical theater giants, like a family portrait shop named after Stephen

Schwartz and a Sondheim toy shop. There's even an intersection of Lloyd and Webber streets. "This is a loving satire. It has to come from a place of love, because if it doesn't, then it just gets ugly," says Cinco Paul, who co-created and co-wrote the series with Ken Daurio, as well as all the songs. "We tease some of these shows and some of the lyrics and some of the tendencies of these writers. But it is all coming from a place of genuine love." If Tveit got to play many classic theater characters, Krakowski got to play with "Chicago," a show her parents took her to when she was only 8 or 9. In Schmicago, she's a showboating lawyer like Billy Flynn from "Chicago" and gets to say things like, "The law is 10% precedent and 90% wow." "I think we all go in with such a love of musical theater that it's more of a loving tribute than even parody," says Krakowski. "We've now hit the musicals that were the musicals that inspired me as a young person, just going to see Broadway shows and dreaming of being up there." Paul said he was already playing with ideas and casting for the second season while they were filming the first. "I really liked the idea of this company of actors coming back in a new show. They're all playing new characters, and I thought that would be really fun." □

Associated Press

'Indiana Jones' to premiere at Cannes with tribute to Ford



Harrison Ford attends the premiere of "The Call of the Wild" in Los Angeles on Feb. 13, 2020.

Associated Press

By **JAKE COYLE**

AP Film Writer

Indiana Jones is swinging into the French Riviera. "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny," the fifth film in the Harrison Ford adventure series, will make its world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival on May 18, festival organizers announced Monday. Cannes will also pay a tribute to Ford for his career. The premiere of "Dial of Destiny," directed by James Mangold, comes

15 years after 2008's "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull" premiered at the French festival. "Dial of Destiny," billed as the final chapter in the franchise, will open in U.S. theaters June 28. "Dial of Destiny," which had been rumored to be heading to Cannes, adds a second megawatt premiere to this year's festival, which kicks off May 16. On Friday, Cannes announced the premiere of

Martin Scorsese's much-anticipated "Killers of the Flower Moon," an adaptation for Apple TV+ of David Grann's bestseller about a series of murders of the Osage Nation in 1920s Oklahoma. Its cast includes Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert De Niro. The film's premiere, set for May 20, will mark Scorsese's first film in Cannes since "After Hours" in 1986. The full Cannes lineup will be announced April 13. □

After March Madness, women's pro basketball options are slim

By DOUG FEINBERG
AP Basketball Writer

DALLAS (AP) — March Madness may have been the last time for fans to see many of the talented college women players compete.

Players' options for professional basketball careers are limited, whether in the U.S. or overseas the jobs just aren't there.

"You can be a great college player and not make a WNBA roster," ESPN WNBA analyst LaChina Robinson said. "You're not only competing with players that are currently on roster, but also a ton of women's basketball players overseas that have been honing their skills and waiting for opportunity to break into the WNBA." The numbers paint a challenging picture.

There are only 12 WNBA teams and 144 roster spots with most of those being filled by returning players.

Over the past six seasons, 64% of players drafted made WNBA rosters according to basketball website 'Beyond Women's Sports'. The high mark was 28 of the 36 draftees in 2019. The low was only 20 the year before.

Even if a player does get into the league, it's a battle for playing time.

Only 60% of players drafted got on the court to play minutes their first year since 2017 according to the basketball website 'Her Hoop Stats.' It's part of the



Minnesota Lynx's Napheesa Collier competes in the skills challenge during the WNBA All-Star festivities Friday, July 26, 2019, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

reason why five of the first-round picks in 2021 are no longer in the league.

There has been talk of WNBA expansion, but nothing has come to fruition yet. Players often turn to playing professionally overseas, working on their games and looking for another shot to play at home.

Now those jobs are also at a premium. Brittney Griner's nine-month incarceration in Moscow along with the war with Ukraine has led to the elimination of dozens of potential jobs in Russia.

Griner is back in the WNBA after her nine-month legal fight in Russia, during

which she was detained when customs officials said they found vape canisters with cannabis oil in her luggage, then later arrested before being released in a high-level prisoner exchange between the U.S. and Russia.

The lost jobs in Russia has a trickle down on openings in other countries as top players who once played there are looking elsewhere for work.

Longtime agent Brian Dyke said that there are fewer countries now that he can send players to. Besides Russia, China and Korea stopped signing foreign

players few years ago because of the coronavirus. Neither has started again. That's roughly another three dozen jobs gone.

"In Korea, everyone used to get \$25,000 a month," Dyke said. "It's a huge loss not having those jobs as those are two of the biggest markets."

Dyke also said he wouldn't send some of his clients to play in other countries because of the political climate.

Athletes Unlimited just completed its second season. Over a dozen WNBA players competed last month in it. The four-team competi-

tion in Dallas is an opportunity for players to stay in the U.S. during the offseason and make up to \$50,000 during the five-week season.

Staying in the U.S. is becoming more important with the WNBA now requiring players to be present at the start of training camp. The requirement can impact playing opportunities outside of the league for WNBA players. Their overseas contract have to include provisions that allow players to return to the U.S. in the middle of a postseason run overseas.

It all makes the path to a professional basketball career for women harder than ever. Players had to declare by March 26 if they planned to enter the WNBA draft unless they were still playing in the NCAA Tournament.

Those players had 48 hours after their last game to declare. South Carolina's Zia Cooke and Dorka Juhasz from UConn are among players headed to the draft.

Others like 6-foot-6 Elizabeth Kitley from Virginia Tech are staying in college, where they enjoy various amenities due to Title IX, including taking charter flights vs flying commercial. Kitley, a senior, despite being a possible first-round pick is one of many college players who have an extra year of eligibility because of COVID. □

Former Hoosiers coach Knight battling undisclosed illness

By MICHAEL MAROT
AP Sports Writer

Former Indiana Hoosiers coach Bob Knight was hospitalized over the weekend with an undisclosed illness but was not listed as a patient on Monday at two hospitals in Bloomington, Indiana, where he lives.

An email from the university about Knight's health was sent to former Indiana basketball players on Friday asking for prayers and saying the former coach hoped to return home soon. The university did not have

an update on Knight's condition on Monday.

The 82-year-old Knight won three national championships, 11 Big Ten titles and 662 games at Indiana before being fired in September 2000 after he allegedly grabbed a student by the arm in a hallway. The incident violated a zero-tolerance policy instituted by the university following an investigation into accusations of physical and verbal abuse made by former player Neil Reed, who died of a heart attack in 2012.

Texas Tech hired Knight in 2001, and he stayed there until retiring in 2008 with a then-Division I record 902 career wins.

Knight was succeeded by his son, Pat, at Texas Tech and moved back to Bloomington in 2019. Then, after vowing never to return to an Indiana University event, he relented on that promise by attending the Hoosiers' game against Purdue in February 2020, joined by dozens of his former players and former Purdue coach Gene Keady. □



Former Indiana basketball head coach Bobby Knight makes an appearance at Indiana University in Bloomington, Ind., Feb. 8, 2020.

Associated Press

MLB game times cut 30 minutes, steals double under new rules

By **RONALD BLUM**
AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Major League Baseball's new rules are working as hoped through the first four days of the season.

The average game time has dropped by 30 minutes, stolen bases have doubled and batting average has increased by 16 percentage points compared to last year's opening weekend.

Games averaged 2 hours, 38 minutes through Sunday with the new pitch clock, down from 3:08 for the first four days of the 2022 season and a 3:04 final average.

In the first year of restrictions on defensive shifts, the .246 batting average for nine-inning games was up from .230 over the first four days last year, when many games were played in cold and wet weather. Left-handed batting average increased to .232 from .229 in last year's first four days and right-handed average went up to .254 from .230.

"We are extremely pleased with the early returns," Commissioner Rob Manfred said Monday. "Fan reaction has been positive to the brisker pace with more action. And players have made a great adjustment to the changes."

Larger bases have cut the distance between bags by 4 1/2 inches, and stolen



Houston Astros' Chas McCormick flies under Chicago White Sox second baseman Elvis Andrus (1) for a stolen base as umpire Rob Drake looks on during the second inning of a baseball game, Sunday, April 2, 2023, in Houston.

Associated Press

bases rose to an average of 1.4 per game from 0.6.

"I think it's in everybody's mind, like, whoa, I can run more. And the more you run and you're successful with it, the more you're going to run," Los Angeles Angels manager Phil Nevin said.

Success rate on steal attempts rose to 85% from 67.4%.

"If teams are going to be successful at it, then you're going to continue to see a high volume of teams pushing the envelope," New York Yankees manager Aaron Boone said.

MLB felt it was about time for drastic change after the average time of nine-inning games rose from 2:33 in 1981 to 2:46 in 2005 and a record 3:10 in 2021. With the introduction of the PitchCom electronic device to signal pitches, the average dropped to 3:04 for the full 2022 season.

Over objections from players, the 11-man competition committee adopted a pitch clock of 15 seconds with no runners on base and 20 seconds with runners. It also required two infielders to be on either side of second base and all in-

fielders to be within the outer boundary of the infield when the pitcher is on the rubber. Players supported increasing bases to 18-inch squares from 15-by-15, proposed as a safety measure. These were the most significant rules changes since the pitcher's mound was lowered from 15 inches to 10 for the 1969 season and the American League adopted the designated hitter in 1973, a rule that was extended to the National League in 2022 following its temporary use during the 2020 pandemic-shortened season. "There's a lot more

action and a lot more appealing product for the fans," Milwaukee Brewers owner Mark Attanasio said. The clock has had a noticeable impact, with Colorado-San Diego taking 2:03 on Sunday, Cleveland-Seattle 2:04 on Saturday and the New York Mets-Miami 2:09 on Friday.

"I don't think it's wrong to take a semi-victory lap right now," Mets manager Buck Showalter said, "but we'll see how it evolves."

There were 41 pitch-clock violations in the first 50 games, an average of 0.82. Of those, 29 were on pitchers, 11 on batters and one on a catcher.

San Francisco and Cleveland tied for the high with four violations each, and Colorado, Detroit, Houston, the Los Angeles Dodgers, Milwaukee, Minnesota and Washington had none.

Sample size is small, with 50 games played of a scheduled 2,430, or just 2%. And early season offense tends to be depressed because of weather in the northwest and midwest the ball travels better as temperature rises. Stolen bases reached a live ball-era high of a 0.85 per game in 1987, when Vince Coleman swiped 109. No one has reached 70 since Jacoby Ellsbury in 2009, and the 0.46 average in 2021 was the lowest in a half-century before an uptick to 0.51 last year. □

Olympian Sunisa Lee says kidney issue ended Auburn season



Auburn's Sunisa Lee competes on the floor exercise during an NCAA gymnastics meet Jan. 7, 2023, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

AUBURN, Ala. (AP) — Olympic gymnastics champion Sunisa Lee said a kidney issue cut short her college career, but she still has her sights set on the Paris Games next year.

Lee, who already had announced plans to leave college and resume training at the elite level this spring, missed the end of the regular season, the Southeastern Conference championships and the NCAA regional because of what Auburn described as a "non-gymnastics health issue." She revealed Mon-

day in a post on social media that it was related to kidney problems.

"It's been challenging to end my Auburn career early, but I am thankful for all the love and support," Lee wrote. "I will not stop pursuing my dreams for a bid to Paris in 2024. In fact, this experience has sharpened my vision for the future. I appreciate all the love and support, and I want to especially thank my doctors, coaches, and the Auburn medical staff for their care during this time."

Lee was the 2020 wom-

en's all-around gymnastics champion in Tokyo. She then became the first reigning Olympic champion to compete at the NCAA level, taking advantage of new name, image and likeness rules that allow college athletes to make money while competing. Lee said in November that this would be her final season at Auburn before focusing on preparations for her second Games.

As a freshman, she won the NCAA title on the balance beam and was runner-up in the all around. □